

Executive Summary

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Review: The theme for the 2004 EMS Annual Report to the King County Council is analysis of the EMS system in King County which is at the midway point of the six-year EMS levy. The following summary is a broad overview of the major issues that remain in the current EMS levy cycle, but also presents some of the regional themes and future challenges emerging for the next EMS levy in 2008.

Current Levy Period: The *2002-2007 EMS Strategic Plan Update* set the major policy directions and initiatives for the regional EMS system in King County. It identified new challenges, established important new initiatives, provided funding linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI), and anticipated essential paramedic service needs. At this mid-point year:

- Paramedic *Advanced Life Support (ALS)* services are the regional priority in the EMS Strategic Plan. The equivalent of 2.3 medic units have been added since 2002 and another 0.5 unit is scheduled for addition in 2006. Conversion of the two EMT/P units to full paramedic units and provision of ALS services in rural areas with longer response times and low call volumes are two EMS challenges (see page 12).
- The EMS Levy supports a portion of *Basic Life Support (BLS) first response activities* in King County. The BLS allocation is increased annually by local CPI and distributed between fire departments based on a complex funding formula. Reducing the 'hold harmless' amount within the formula and the impact on fire departments by voter-approved legislation designed to limit tax growth are two EMS challenges (see page 13).
- *Regional Programs and Services* are fully funded by the EMS levy and increase annually by CPI. At this halfway point through the levy period, excellent progress has been made in the implementation of the identified *Strategic Initiatives*. Adequate funds have been reserved to meet the identified commitments for the second half of the levy (see page 14).

Next Levy Period: Although we are only halfway through the current levy, discussions are already underway to initiate the early steps in the planning process for the next EMS levy in 2008. Given that the current EMS Strategic Plan has proven to be so successful as a regional policy directive, it is anticipated that a general regional process will be implemented again. The following are a few of the anticipated issues for discussion during the planning process:

- How long should the next EMS levy last?
- How many cities over 50,000 will be needed to approve the levy?
- Are there other sources of revenue for support of EMS activities?
- What new directions can this region take to continue to build on the successful regional medical model?
- How do we plan for increasing workloads and services in more remote rural areas?
- Should the BLS funding level be increased in the EMS levy?

Year 2003 Statistics: In Seattle and King County, the Emergency Medical Services system responded to 152,619 calls with a continued three-year decline in ALS calls volumes, due in part to the success of the ALS Dispatch Criteria Revisions (see page 22).